
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	819 6th Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Downtown Historic District		Consent Denial
		X	Concept Review
Meeting Date:	April 25, 2013	X	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	13-269		New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		Demolition
			Subdivision

Studio Crowley Hall Architects, representing owner Jung Kong, seeks conceptual design review for alterations and a five -story addition to the rear of a three-story rowhouse.

Building History and Description

819 6th Street, NW is a three-story, red brick, bay-fronted rowhouse capped by a slate pyramidal roof. According to the original building permit, the house was constructed in 1896 at a cost of \$5,500 for owner B. Schlosberg. The plans were prepared by A.B. Mullett & Company, the successor firm to the practice founded by Alfred B. Mullett, the Supervising Architect of the Treasury who was responsible for the design of numerous federal buildings in the 1860s and 1870s and later ran a successful private practice until his death in 1890.

The property is immediately adjacent to a row of two-story contributing buildings to the south with a seven-story non-contributing apartment building in mid-block. A narrow pedestrian alley immediately to the north separates the property from three- and four-story contributing rowhouses and apartment buildings facing Eye Street.

Proposal

The plans call for removing a one-story shed addition and the rear walls at the second and third levels for connection to a proposed five-story rear addition; the floor and roof assemblies of the main block of the house would remain. The addition would span the width of the property (20'), extending to the rear property line and rising approximately 54 feet tall. It would be set back approximately 38 from the building's front façade, the depth of the main block of the house. The addition would be clad in brick, with large multi-pane industrial style metal windows.

Evaluation

This project was initially proposed as a seven-story rear addition that rose substantially higher and sat partially on top of the existing building that would have resulted in substantial demolition to the underlying building. Based on concerns expressed in an HPO report to the HPRB in September, the applicants withdrew their application and worked to revise the plans.

When reviewing additions, the Board has most frequently cited the principle that an addition should be subordinate to the historic building to which it is being added in order to allow the historic structure to remain dominant and not overwhelmed by new construction. However, in some limited instances where the context supported it, the Board has approved additions that are larger than the buildings to which they are attached. These exceptions to the principle of being subordinate have been made if the addition can convincingly appear as a separate building to the rear or side of the historic building. As with the review of new construction, this approach has only been approved when the addition was found to be compatible with its context where buildings of different sizes and types allowed for the compatible insertion of a larger structure.

The combination of its substantial (37') set back from the front façade and its comparable height and alignment with the rear of the historic mid-rise apartment building at 510 Eye Street would result in a relationship that is within the established range of heights on this block. While not invisible from the street, the setback, form, materials and height of the addition would result in being perceived as a compatible, secondary element behind this row of historic buildings, rather than a discordant looming presence on top of it.

The proposal is consistent with the principle often cited by the Board that taller rear additions should typically be kept off the main block of the building, in order to limit demolition, retain their simple block-like form of the original building, and to preserve a sense of the open volume above the historic building.

As the design continues to be developed, the HPO recommends that the fenestration continue to be studied in consultation with staff. As an example, as shown on A-14, the banks of windows on the north elevation should be pulled further from the corner to allow more substantial masonry corners.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept for a five story rear addition to be compatible with the character of the historic building and its context within the Downtown Historic District, and delegate final approval to staff.